Christianity and Society

- Taking Sides and Changing Sides
  ROBERT E. FITCH
- The Public and U.S. Foreign Policy
  ERNEST W. LEFEVER
- Provincialism in Christian Ethics
  PHILIP WILLIAMS AND ROBERT W. WOOD

• Editorials • Book Reviews
• News of Christian Action

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CHRISTIANITY and SOCIETY

EDITORIALS

The Way of Non-violent Resistance

Everyone should be heartened by the success of the Negro bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. A little Negro seamstress, who had the respect of everyone and had always been submissive under the segregation laws, suddenly reacted rigorously to the discourtesy of a bus driver. That act of defiant self-respect set off what may yet be a very historic movement. The Negroes boycotted the segregated buses. They are still boycotting them, and the white racists are livid with anger because the boycott represents a long overdue application of economic pressure for the achievement of justice. Everyone who appreciates the assertion of the dignity of man in defiance of contempt and prejudice will rejoice both at the resolution of the Negroes and the apparent prospect of the success of their enterprise.

The boycott is inspired by the principles of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organization. The local leader is the Reverend Martin Luther King. He scrupulously avoids violence and calls his strategy the "way of love." It is the most effective way of justice. Those of us who are non-pacifists will be quick to admit that whenever pacifism is not preoccupied with moral scruples about guiltlessness and personal perfection, whenever it does not occupy itself with the problem of contracting out of responsibilities of justice in the name of personal perfection, whenever it seeks for justice, it becomes impressive.

In the case of the Montgomery boycott the most obviously effective way of bringing pressure for the sake of justice has been adopted. Violence in any local situation is not only wrong but self-defeating. In the case of a Negro minority in a white society it would be suicidal. The boycott and the strike are recognized forms of pressure in a free society, but the boycott is unfortunately not as widely recognized legally as the strike. Hence the court proceedings against the Negro boycott leaders. But it is very obvious that even in a just and free society there must be forms of pressure short of violence, but more potent than the vote, to establish justice in collective relations.

It may be foolish to cavil about terms in such a situation as the Montgomery boycott. But one cannot help but question the definition of the boycott as the "way of love." Love is a motive and not a method. Love must always be intent on justice, and the boycott is one of the methods of establishing justice. It is justice, rather than love, which becomes relevant whenever one has to deal with conflicting wills and interests. In this case of a race suffering long from the pride and arrogance of another race, one can have little question about the justice of the boycott against the segregated buses, nor of the adequacy of the method by which justice is being achieved.

R. N.

The Desegregation Issue

Despite one's rejoicing over the success of the bus boycott in Montgomery, there is reason to have fears about the course of desegregation in the South in general. History is full of many surprises. There is no more surprising—and yet, on reflection, understandable—historical development than the turn that race relations have taken following the Supreme Court decision.

We were all proud of the growing amity and justice between the two races in America. We rejoiced that we were not South Africa. There was always the road to the future open to those who suffered from race prejudice. Then the Supreme Court spelled out the logical implications of "equality before the law" as it is guaranteed in our Constitution. In doing so the Court wisely decided that enough progress had been made in race relations to discard the "sepa-

rate but equal" device by which the Court, in an 1896 decision, sought to prevent a collision between the Constitution and local custom.

It was fairly easy to prove that absolutely separate facilities for the two races are never equal. Furthermore, it was obvious that the mere idea of separation in education implied inequality. The rigorous resistance to common schools now proves that this implied inequality was indeed one of the cornerstones of the segregated schools. So the Supreme Court made a decision which was hailed both in this country and abroad as a milestone in the progress of justice. No one quite anticipated that the decision, which will undoubtedly be ultimately just what it was judged to be, would unloose suppressed prejudices and fears and would complicate the problem of race relations for perhaps decades. The South, or at least the racist minority in the South, is up in arms. The two races are not living exactly at sword's point; but the tension in some localities has become very dangerous. Furthermore, the effort of the racists to defy and circumvent the court decision has given some southern states the quality of quasi-Fascist terror and intimidation. An organic and slowly developing progress toward justice has been thwarted by a decision which spelled out the ultimate goal of the process.

Could it be that men can walk on a road step by step, if they are not too sure of the end of the road? Could it be that we are willing to approach the ideal of equality practically, but that our race pride makes it impossible to acknowledge the validity of the goal explicitly? Perhaps there is something of this psychology in the development to which St. Paul refers when he confesses "I had not known sin, . . . except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The explicit challenge of the moral standard may arouse subconscious fears and prejudices, which might have been gradually beguiled by a slower approach to the ultimate standard.

But perhaps these speculations are irrelevant. Perhaps the difficulty lies with more explicit problems. The two races are, after all, not culturally equal. The fact that the disparity between their cultural standards was caused precisely by the education which the Court, in the name of justice, tried to eliminate does not help the fathers and mothers who are afraid that common schools will lower the cultural quality of their children's education. Common schools were, in a sense, the last place where desegregation could take place without friction, though the first place where it had to take place to eliminate the hiatus in culture. At any rate, what we have in the southern resistance is a combination of a very unreasonable race pride with a very reasonable apprehension about culture. In the background there is always the very unreasonable fear about intermarriage. The fear is unreasonable because there is more mixture of blood on the basis of illicit sex relations where the races are unequal than there ever will be on the basis of licit sex relations where the races approach equality. But in race relations one deals not only with facts, but also with fears which may be more potent than facts.

There is a very general conviction among people interested in interracial amity that it is important to follow William Faulkner's advice and not push the common school too fast, lest the southern whites be pushed "off balance" and become subject to hysteria. After all, one cannot correct a historically founded and collective evil by any court decision or any political policy. So many good things in history take time to grow. But this advice will not seem very sound to the Negro race which has suffered so long from the white man's arrogance. Now that it has the law on its side, any counsel of prudence will seem to be a suggestion for ignoble compromise.

R. N.

The God Who Has Become The Devil

In the Communist system Stalin was an anachronistic reincarnation of the priest-kings and god-kings of the ancient empires. It is the very nature of political religions to exalt the community as the source and

end of human existence and to exalt the ruler as the very source of its order. The fact that a man could be deified in a secular modern state, and that the person deified could be the erstwhile prophet of a utopian secular religion, merely proves that the sources of human folly are not all in the past and that enlightened moderns are as capable of explicit idolatry as ancient Egyptians.

But nothing in history ever exactly repeats itself. The ancient god-kings ruled by traditional prestige. This god-king made his way by force and fraud. Consequently the pretension of sanctity was more outrageously in contrast with the character of his power than was that of the ancient beneficiaries of idolatry. The hiatus was bound to place a strain on human credulity. But it is rather surprising that the pretensions should have been unmasked so early, only three short years after his death, and that the unmasking should have been done by men who were hitherto his faithful and sycophantic henchmen. Khrushchev, the present Communist boss, confessed in a secret meeting that no one who came into Stalin's presence could be certain of coming out alive. He confessed that most of the purge trials in which the dictator eliminated the Old Bolshevik foes were dependent on fake evidence. The whole sorry mess of force and fraud was ruefully confessed.

Why did the present collective leadership engage in this hazardous revelation of the skeletons in the Communist closet? There are indications that the army demanded the rehabilitation of its purged leaders, and the present Defense Minister, Zhukov, may have insisted on revenge for his banishment after the war. It is also probable that the present oligarchy were anxious to disassociate themselves from the odium of Stalinist tyranny.

But whatever the motives of this radical de-divinization, the consequences may be very historic. It is even more dangerous to disturb the symbols than to disturb the dogmas of this fanatic secular creed. Even the Leninist dogma of an inevitable war between capitalism and Communism has been revised, and now the symbol of the monolithic unity of Stalinism has been destroyed. The comrades both behind and before the iron curtain are confused. The *Daily Worker* is actually letting the readers conduct a debate on the merits of the downgrading of Stalin. The Italian leader, Togliatti, and the French boss, Thorez, are both embarrassed. In fact every minor boss is embarrassed because they all have very eulogistic quotations about Stalin on their records, and most of them have their positions by Stalin's grace. It may be too optimistic to hope that this will lead to a real disintegration, but it will certainly contribute to the confusion.

The present collective leadership thinks it is getting back to the "democratic centralism" of Lenin's creed; it wants freedom for the oligarchy. But the question is whether it is possible to have a genuine freedom without a broader base. Perhaps a new dictator will arise just to establish order among the warring oligarchs. Khrushchev may not be the man, but it is likely that someone will. The Roman military dictatorship could not get along without a dictator after Augustus seized all the power. There may be an interesting historical analogy there. But so many surprising things happen in history that one must not press any analogy too consistently.

R. N.

The Formidable Foe

No one can doubt any more that post-Stalin Communism, though not threatening us with the dogma of an inevitable war, is a more formidable foe than the rigid and paranoid Communism of the Stalin era. That kind of Communism consolidated the anti-communist world, both in the West and in the East. And it covered many of our own mistakes by making more grievous ones.

Post-Stalin Communism has achieved a flexibility and maneuverability which presses us at every hand and threatens to undo all our alliances. It has mounted the barrier of the Moslem world by the simple expedient of offering arms to Egypt—at the price, of course, of heightening the tensions in the Middle East. It has embarrassed us in our desire to save Israel, which is in danger of

being pushed into the sea by the Arabs as they seek to avenge their original defeat.

The most stunning victories of Communism have, however, been in Asia, where it has wooed the neutralist nations, such as India and Burma, has scattered contracts for heavy industrial equipment and opened the prospect of technical power without democracy. The prospect is inviting because the ex-colonial nations find western democracy either irrelevant or unattainable. Communism has further exploited the residual resentments of the ex-colonial peoples against the western "imperialists" and given a momentary plausibility to the charge that imperialism is but the inevitable consequence of capitalism. The charge leaves Communism's own power impulses obscured by the dogma. Our recent difficulties with desegregation have contributed to the Communist propaganda against us and threaten to undo the wholesome effects of the Supreme Court decision. Everywhere on the two colored continents resentment against the imperialistic impact of a technical civilization upon the non-technical cultures and resentment against white arrogance are being exploited, ironically enough, at a time when the imperialistic impact has abated, both for moral reasons and because of changed power factors. It is interesting that the new Communist policy tends to enlist the neutral nations in the so-called "peace bloc," while our policy in regard to Communist China remains inflexible and plays into Communist hands. Our policy of organizing military alliances against feared Communist aggression has, meanwhile, become or seems to have become irrelevant as the Korean aggression fades into memory and as the pacts sow confusion between nations who are and who are not in these alliances—India and Burma for instance. Military aggression is always a possibility, but surely the idea that it is the primary danger, when the Communist movement avails itself chiefly of the instruments of revolution, infiltration, and chicane, is too inflexible for our day.

We have done little better in Europe than in Asia against the new Communist policy. The Austrian settlement has sowed vain hopes in Germany for a similar neutralism. German rearmament has been accomplished, but the NATO alliance has been weakened by many factors, including the preoccupation of the French with their turbulent empire in Africa. The new Communist line, tending toward united fronts, will not reproduce the old alliances between Socialists and Communists which were popular, at least in France, before the war. But it has a tendency to make left-wing governments dependent on Communist votes in both France and Italy.

Against all these gains we have only one hope, and that is that the destruction of old dogmas and symbols will destroy the fanatic zeal and monolithic unity of the Communist realm. It is a real hope, and it may ultimately be fulfilled. But, meanwhile, the advantages seem to be with the Communist foe for the next decades.

We face such a long and arduous task, bound to exercise our imagination, try our courage, and test our patience, that there is an ever recurrent danger that we may succumb once more to the hysteria from which we were fortunately delivered only a few years ago.

We will make many mistakes, and we must accustom ourselves to the enmity and envy of many nations. These hostilities will be prompted partly by our errors; but they would be manifest even if we made no mistakes. Surely no nation has ever been tested as severely as this great nation will be tested in the next decades.

R. N.

The British and the Island of Cyprus

Of all imperial nations, Britain has shown the most imagination and prudence in yielding before the rising tides of nationalism, even though it meant liquidating an empire. They have stabilized democracy in Asia by their wisdom. Why then should they be stubbon to the point of foolhardiness on the island of Cyprus?

Perhaps the answer is to be found in the fact that desperation has robbed them of

(continued on page 22)

Taking Sides and Changing Sides

ROBERT E. FITCH

The chief business of a Christian social strategy may well be defined as the art of taking sides and of changing sides. That the Christian has to be equally skilled in both of these operations—the taking and the changing of sides—expresses the dialectic between Christian principles and secular expedients. It involves the basic tensions between identification and criticism, between relevance and transcendence, between redemption and judgment, between conviction and humility.

There is, of course, a dual sense in which the Christian takes sides. In the fundamental and permanent sense he takes the Christian side. By this I mean simply that he determines as well as he can—by study, by prayer, by experimental action—what are the basic principles of social ethics in his religious heritage. Here he will discover, not as bare abstractions, but as ideals that function in explicit detail, the principles of personal righteousness, of social justice, of the love of persons, and of liberty, principles that belong to the tradition. Naturally Christians will differ among themselves, as individuals and as groups, in their capacity to apprehend the various elements of the tradition and in the kind of emphasis they may put here or there. Nevertheless, this tradition is the common heritage with which all should begin; this is where all Christians should take sides together forever.

It is taking sides in the primary sense which necessitates the taking sides in a secondary sense. For the historic principles call for application in the contemporary scene. Here the Christian has to look about him and to choose this or that institution, this or that technique, which would seem best qualified to do the job. In the Middle Ages Christianity took sides with feudalism and with the principle of order. In the early modern period a large part of Christianity took sides with capitalism and with democracy in the interests of liberty. In a later modern period other Christians took sides with socialism and with a new conception of justice. But as it was taking sides in the primary sense which necessitated taking sides in the secondary sense, so was it this same primary loyalty which, at a certain point, called for the changing of sides.

Here, surely, is where we experience the greatest difficulty. For it is humanly pleasant to identify a temporal expedient with a transcendent sanction, but it is most painful to have to yank ourselves loose from some temporal loyalty and turn perhaps to its opposite and contradictory, though still in the name of the primary loyalty.

Our Present Pickle

These highly generalized prolegomena are ceremonially elaborated at this moment because they point with precision to the kind of pickle in which Christian social action in the United States now finds itself. Not often in our history have we had such a clear conception of our basic loyalty, of our primary taking sides. Yet we are obviously confused and troubled by where to locate our secondary taking sides. Some of the sides to which we adhered so stubbornly for some decades have by this time either failed or been fulfilled. Because the new sides have not yet made known their imperative to us, some persons conceal their uncertainty by hanging on blindly to the old sides, while others prepare to argue that we should be content with the primary taking of sides and forget the secondary altogether.

Part of what defines the problem in the United States is the rise of the new conservatism. This trend is all-pervasive and affects every area of life. It is most obvious in the fields of politics and of economics, with the return to the free enterprise of a "democratic capitalism." But it begins to show itself also in literature and in art; even in philosophy, in the turning away

from positivism to a reconsideration of values; even in sexual morality, in the attempt to recover the ideals of chastity and of marital fidelity. Theology makes a special contribution here to the human comedy, because theology had its neo-orthodox or neo-conservative movement some years ago; and now when all else is turning conservative, I suppose theology can keep up the dialectical tension only by turning neo-liberal!

The confusion inherent in all this comes to a focus in the approaching presidential election. As of the moment of this writing, we find Adlai moving to the middle of the road so as to make himself the heir apparent to the moderate conservatism of Ike, gaining in favor with the politicians and with the proletariat as he loses lustre with the intelligentsia. We find some liberal journals that championed Adlai in 1952 now intimating a preference for Ike, and we find some persons who voted for Ike in 1952 now preparing themselves to vote for Adlai in 1956. There is also the extraordinary possibility that the Republican Party may be in a position to take a stronger stand for the civil rights of racial minorities, so that many an ardent liberal in this area may find himself voting some day not for a Stevenson but for a Nixon. By the time this essay appears in print some of these details will have been altered. But I suggest that the basic confusion about liberalism and conservatism, about the number of conflicting sides into which our Christian social strategy may be splitting itself, far from being resolved, will simply have been compounded into chaos on a more spectacular scale.

The Doctrinaire Liberal

In the purely formal sense the trouble with identifying Christian social ethics with liberalism, old-style or new, is that liberalism has always been a kind of rationalism. As such it has a tendency to become doctrinaire and to degenerate into a fundamentalism.

For instance, it was only three or four years ago that the definition of a liberal in the United States was primarily an affair of creedal tests. There were four articles of faith to which one had to subscribe: the belief in federal housing, the belief in a federal fair employment practices act, the belief in the federal retention of control over off-shore oil, and the belief in the abolition or radical truncation of the Taft-Hartley Act. The momentary merits of these particular articles is not now under consideration. The important point is that none of these articles is derivative from the primary loyalty of a Christian, or even from the secondary loyalty of a Christian liberal. None of these items expresses even such a thing as a "middle axiom." Indeed none of them expresses any axiom at all. What we have here is the bald confusion of principles with techniques. And it is tied up with the sort of vicious creedalism which does not know the difference between the faith by which men live, and the doctrine which explicates the faith, and the devices which implement the doctrine.

At this particular moment one cannot help speculating what would have happened if the doctrinaire liberals had actually been successful in forcing through Congress a federal FEPA. We already have at hand a kind of insurrection taking place in some parts of the country as a consequence of the decision of the Supreme Court in favor of desegregating the public schools. Now it is a fact of political technique, not of political principle, that the American people will take certain coercions from the Supreme Court that they will not take from Congress. Whatever is done by Congress too easily bears the taint of partisan prejudice, whereas what is decreed by the Court after due deliberation and with unanimous consent carries a higher moral authority. If certain states revolt this much against a decree of the Court, then with how much greater vehemence would they resist a law of Congress!

Not only will a doctrinaire liberalism confuse principles with techniques, but, because it becomes wedded to certain techniques, it will denounce those techniques which are not its own, but which do best

the job it wishes done. I find it humbling—because I am implicated—to review the way in which those of us who were ardent Socialists in the 1930's kept up a continual attack on the measures of the New Deal as mere palliatives to capitalist decadence, although these measures actually accomplished what we wanted most to accomplish. I find it ironical—since only my friends are involved—to note the way in which some liberals who denounced Ike in 1952 for being the foe of all their most cherished ideals now find that he is just the man who has brought the nation farthest along the proper course. All of this, doubtless, is part of human fallibility, and Christian social action cannot escape error any more than does another. Nevertheless, because the liberal is a rationalist, the Christian liberal ought to beware of the moment when his strategy degenerates into a sterile creedalism which defines orthodoxy not even in terms of principles but merely in terms of temporary expedients.

Governor Stevenson made a good crack when he spoke of certain reactionaries who had to be dragged screaming into the twentieth century. By this time, however, he has become better acquainted with certain liberals who cannot traverse the more trifling distance from the 1930's to the 1950's, and whose shrill adolescent devotions are a principal obstacle to the development of an adult American liberalism.

The Intuitive Conservative

Unlike the liberal the conservative is officially irrational and intuitive, with the appeal to the feelings more blatant than any appeal to the intellect. Obviously the liberal, who wants to change things, needs to present his arguments. The conservative, who is in possession of the status quo, has primarily just to stand pat. And it was the Romantic movement in history, in spite of its brave beginnings, which finally produced the great philosophies of conservatism.

Chateaubriand has always fascinated me as the spokesman of an irrational conservatism, both because he pretended to be an apologist for Christianity and because he never hesitated in the slightest before the extravagance of the Romantic imagination. He saw the genius of Christianity revealed alike in Roman ruins and in American rattlesnakes. One remembers especially the way he wooed the ladies from philosophy back to faith. Said he, in effect: "You ladies, now, where did you get your good looks? Was it not from your first mother, Eve? and was it not *le bon dieu* who endowed her with every grace and charm? But whence came bad complexions and sickly seasons, red eyes and falling hair, disfavor with men? Is it not from the study of philosophy? Well, then, choose now! Will it be reason, or religion?" In brief, the girls ought to believe in God because that's where they got their sex appeal! Never was the *argumentum ad feminam* so adroitly put.

When we say that conservatism is officially intuitive and irrational, it is perhaps necessary to make certain distinctions between British and French traditions. Whether conservative or radical, for the most part, the Englishman appeals to experience while the Frenchman parades his reasons. Thus Burke, the spokesman of British traditionalism, is only slightly more irrational than Locke, the spokesman for British liberalism. And de Bonald and de Maistre, for French traditionalism, are rationalists, only in a different sense from the liberal Voltaire. Nevertheless, the basic distinction is still discernible. The Burke who inveighs against the French Revolution is always irrational—at his best an eloquent rhapsodist of the organic and traditional, at his worst degenerating into hysteria and impotence. De Bonald and de Maistre may want to return to what they call reason—the reason of Aquinas and the thirteenth century—but their appeal to reason is largely irrational and emotional. Instead, the conservative finds it most difficult to be reasonable in the defense of the rational.

Any one who in years past has made an objective study of the philosophy of conservatism will therefore hesitate before giving an ardent embrace to the neo-conservatives on the American scene. Let us pass up

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The Public and U.S. Foreign Policy

ERNEST W. LEFEVER

Last year Walter Lippmann declared that "prevailing public opinion" in America "has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures" in U.S. foreign policy. "The people," he said, "have imposed a veto upon the judgments of informed and responsible officials. They have compelled the governments, which usually know what would have been wiser, or was necessary, or was more expedient, to be too late with too little, or too long with too much, too pacifist in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutralist or appeasing in negotiation or too intransigent." This is true because "the cycle of subjective sentiments on war and peace is usually out of gear with the cycle of objective developments," and popular opinion reflects "a situation which no longer exists." (*The Public Philosophy,* pp. 20-21.)

Mr. Lippmann's charge that public opinion is ill-informed, tardy, and often wrong on international issues is shared by too many competent observers to be dismissed lightly. It raises the whole question of the role of the public in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy in a democracy, where statesmen must take seriously the will of the people from whom they draw their power and in whose name they act.

It is not difficult to recall instances in which the President and the State Department yielded to public passion or pressure groups against their better judgment and pursued foreign policies which were subsequently regarded as unwise—McKinley going to war with Spain in 1898, Harding holding the Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921, Secretary Kellogg negotiating the Paris Pact to outlaw war in 1928, Roosevelt giving in to neutrality legislation in the 1930's, and Truman permitting the drastic disarmament and demobilization at the end of World War II. Truman advocated U.M.T. to offset demobilization, but the Congress did not concur.

This is not the whole story. The same "public" which in 1945 assumed that America had performed its stint for world peace by helping to crush totalitarianism and to establish the United Nations only two years later supported the Marshall Plan and military aid to Greece and Turkey and in 1949 supported the creation of NATO. How could the same public be so wrong and so right about the international responsibilities of the United States? When and under what conditions is public opinion a positive force in policy formation? When does it exert a negative influence on policy?

Two Levels of Public Opinion

There are two levels of public opinion which need to be distinguished from one another. *First,* in common usage the term "public opinion" refers to the collective position of "the public," or more accurately, articulate groups within the public, on issues of general concern. These issues may be broad questions, such as intervention vs. isolation, or more specific problems, such as the recognition or nonrecognition of Red China. *Second,* on a deeper level public opinion can refer to the overall moral consensus of a nation, those common values which define the meaning and purpose of its people.

Public opinion on both levels plays a role in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. On the deeper level, the national moral consensus defines the limits within which the government must act and sets the goals which our leaders are morally obligated to pursue. Public opinion or advice on current foreign policy issues, as Mr. Lippmann points out, often involves demands which, if yielded to, would violate the value consensus. In the late 1930's, for example, the American people rightly were dedicated to the preservation of the United States as a sovereign and democratic nation, but at the same time they insisted upon certain specific programs, including neutrality legislation, which made it almost

impossible for President Roosevelt to honor their fundamental loyalties.

When the immediate demands of the public or powerful pressure groups go against the long-term interests of the nation, the President often finds himself in a dilemma. George F. Kennan says that many of our unwise foreign policies have resulted from Executive acquiescence "to short-term trends in public opinion." In situations where the public fails to understand the nature and seriousness of a crisis, Hans J. Morgenthau says the policy makers "must either sacrifice what they consider good policy upon the altar of public opinion, or by devious means gain popular support for policies whose true nature they conceal from the public." (*In Defense of the National Interest,* p. 224.) If public sentiment runs counter to the national purpose, a responsible President must either ignore it or seek to correct it by mobilizing support for his own policy proposals. If popular passion is too strong to ignore or correct, it appears that the two alternatives suggested by Mr. Morgenthau are the only ones left short of resigning from office.

The Limits of Public Advice on Specific Issues

There are four factors which limit the quality and effectiveness of public advice on current foreign policy issues.

1. *Public opinion is only one of the many factors which determine the foreign policy of a modern democratic state.* Foreign policy is largely the response of a national government to events and developments beyond the frontiers of its legal jurisdiction and, more important, beyond its capacity fully to control. This vast and stubborn external realm includes the power, purpose, and unpredictability of hostile nations, allies, and uncommitted peoples; the weight of tradition and precedent; the inexorable facts of international economic life; and the vicissitudes of history generally.

Among the internal factors which further narrow the foreign policy alternatives open to the government are the policy predisposition and resiliency of the party in power; the character and competence of the President and Secretary of State; the quality of the unending stream of advice and information from a multitude of experts in and out of government; the action or inaction of the Congress; and finally "public opinion."

2. *Foreign policy problems are complex, delicate, and urgent.* Technical competence is required to understand the complexity of the great majority of issues. Most problems involve delicate aspects which must remain confidential. On both counts the public is ruled out. Even if all important facets of a problem could be made public, and the electorate had a much better understanding of world politics than it has, the rapidly changing international scene would force a decision long before the public could express an informed and relevant judgment.

Recommended Reading

There is very little critical writing on the relation of the public to foreign policy. The following titles are among the best:

Dean Acheson, *A Democrat Looks at His Party,* Harper, 1955. 199 pp. See especially pp. 59-113.

Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy,* Harcourt, Brace, 1950, 269 pp.

"Christian Faith and American Politics," *Social Action,* November 1951, 36 pp.

Elmer Davis, "Vox Populi and Foreign Policy," *Harper's Magazine,* June 1952, pp. 66-73.

George F. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy,* Princeton University Press, 1954, 120 pp. See especially pp. 91-120.

Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy,* Little, Brown, 1955, 189 pp. See especially pp. 3-87.

Lester B. Pearson, *Democracy in World Politics,* Princeton University Press, 1955, 123 pp. See especially pp. 96-123.

3. *The structure of the U.S. Government does not provide for the direct participation of the public in the formulation of policy on particular issues.* The President and the Executive Branch have the primary responsibility for the formulation of policy and the sole responsibility for administering it. Most policy proposals originate in the Executive Branch. The Congress can give or withhold its consent only on those matters prescribed by the Constitution. Through its control of the purse strings the Congress can veto or modify certain policies proposed by the President. On the majority of the most significant issues the Congress is limited to expressing concurrence, but it can restrain the President directly by enacting laws designed to narrow the alternatives open to him. The neutrality laws of the 1930's and the current efforts to curb the President's treaty-making powers through a Constitutional amendment are examples of Congressional restraint. The Congress is least influential on major military-security issues and most influential on those non-security issues which have specific domestic implications, such as immigration, trade, and foreign aid.

4. *Certain persistent elements in the American character make it difficult for the public to form sound judgments on national security issues.* Americans tend to want simple and permanent solutions to complex and continuing problems. We tend to see morally ambiguous problems in terms of moralistic, black-and-white alternatives. Our mood, influenced by the slogans and over-simplifications of a none-too-responsible mass press, tends to fluctuate from one extreme to the other. We tend to overreact to real or imagined danger and to be unduly apathetic in periods of stability and peace. Our preoccupation with "private values" and individual material success tends to blind us to the realities of world politics and the interests of other peoples. Our tendency to escape from suffering and responsibility is quickly overcome by the shock of a Pearl Harbor or a Korea.

These four factors help to explain why the advice of the American public on current foreign policy issues tends to be ill-informed, too late, and wrong. This is no cause for alarm, because the mass of citizens cannot and should not be experts. There are far more important ways by which the public exercises its rightful control over the general course of foreign policy.

Public opinion is most reliable on current issues when it is a response to responsible and courageous Executive leadership.

Where "the Public" is Sovereign

The American people do determine the behavior of the United States in world politics. Our foreign policy may shift from responsibility to irresponsibility, but ultimately it is in the hands of "the people," and it will remain there as long as our democratic institutions continue to function. Adult citizens make their basic contribution to foreign policy not by giving advice on day-by-day policy decisions, but by determining the values for which this nation stands, by creating a climate in which these values can be effectively pursued, and by choosing between alternative sets of leaders to run the government.

1. *The public determines the national purpose:* In our homes, schools, and churches the values which make up our national purpose are transmitted, renewed, and reinterpreted. It is the duty of the President, in consultation with his advisers and with the consent of the Congress, to translate this purpose into appropriate policies. In 1947, for example, the President proposed that our national goals of peace and security could best be served by active American leadership in a free-world coalition. Public consent to the President's foreign policy was registered in Congressional appropriations to support the Marshall Plan and aid for Greece and Turkey and in the 1948 election.

2. *The public provides the moral climate in which foreign policy is formulated and conducted.* The climate may be favorable or unfavorable to policies which honor the national purpose. The quality of the na-

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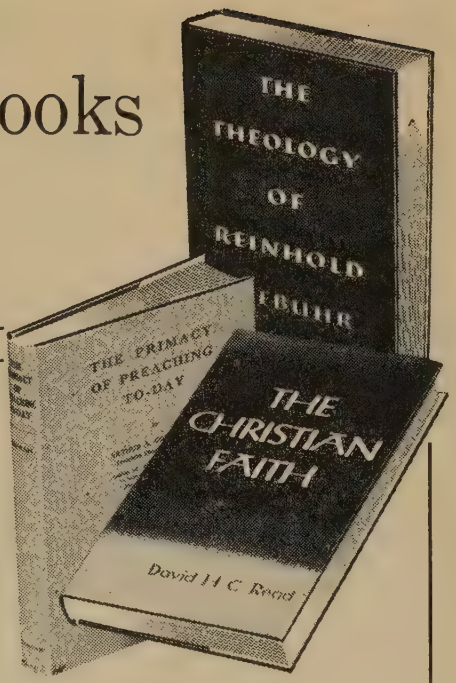

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Provincialism in Christian Ethics: Two Comments

MISDIRECTED CONCERN

PHILIP WILLIAMS

There have been few times in recent history when the country has been so complacent in the presence of so many disturbing facts.

—James Reston, *New York Times*
March 9, 1956

There can be little doubt that Robert McAfee Brown was right when he recently described the American temper as topsy-turvy—anxious about the ultimate questions and complacent about the day-to-day problems where grim omens of our times should be disturbing us deeply. After only a five-year tour of mission duty in anxious Asia, an American returns to his homeland with a feeling that he is a Rip Van Winkle, ill-prepared for the shock of rediscovering the "new world" of complacency which is his own country. My deepest impression is of America's failure to sense the state of *world* affairs. In this period of our provincial prosperity we do, to be sure, respond with fear (and money) when some particular troubled spot on the globe brings an outright crisis to our attention. What we lack is the means of understanding that the crisis is constantly brewing just short of boiling over in much of the world. What we need is some perspective on our own provincialism.

A Study in Contrasts

A few brief observations on our relations with Japan may serve to indicate a number of our blind-spots. During the past six years our relations with Japan have deteriorated at a dangerous pace. This has become clearer as we have placed all our emphasis upon military defenses and "aid only for mutual security" at the highly inappropriate period when Russian slogans of "peaceful coexistence" have been wooing Asian nationalisms. Even our efforts in economic aid are being rebuffed, while Russian and Chinese propaganda is taken at face value by the Asian nations.

The growth of China's popularity in Japan has been documented well in some recent articles here, though unfortunately our daily papers tell us little of this creeping revolution. (Even the *New York Times* tries to balance every report of trouble in Japan with an item of equal length recalling some past achievement of our policies.) While we go on planning tests of our superweapons in the Pacific, with a cavalier attitude that seems to treat the area as an American lake, the dove-waving Chinese induce greater and greater numbers of Japanese businessmen, journalists, labor leaders, diplomats, and educators to take their guided tours to the Paradise where unemployment is overcome, where there are no flies or beggars, and where every problem of health, education, and security is cared for by the State.

How flat our slogans of political and economic freedom sound in the ears of Asians can only be estimated if we imagine ourselves as slaves of poverty who have never experienced such freedoms. Our slogans of mutual defense are even less bearable to those who see their own society holding nothing worth defending—everything in need of radical change. Symbolic are the opposite sides we have on the international "calorie question." We do not know what it means to live in a land where there are too few calories to keep body and soul together. The Asian cannot conceive of a culture where calories are to be feared, and the pattern of diet is directed toward the advertised brands of non-caloric food and drink.

Another contrast is evident in the popularity of psychotherapy in America. Personally, I view with real misgivings the increased concern that we feel must be directed toward the "inner problems" of individual life. Is there not a danger that—

having reached the level of meeting basic physical needs for most of our population—we may, by turning inward, miss the task given our land and its people to wrestle with the world's problems of social need? It is significant that Japan's leaders are so absorbed with over-arching concern for world affairs that they are not yet victimized by problems of neurosis and psychosis to any great degree.

A further difference is in the comparative attitudes of students. In Japan they mass for political parades and protest meetings. Here in America (as *Life* magazine indicated to Asia) student outbursts seem limited to panty raids. Similarly, the Japanese will go on reading about world affairs on the first three or four pages of their skimpy papers, while we stop with the local news or turn to world problems only when we are involved in a headline crisis. Again, when the Japanese rise almost to the man in opposition to our H-bomb testing, we try to point to objective facts, as if the abstract measurement of damages done by the atomic bombs and their successors would offset the emotional reactions of the Japanese. Our fetish of seeking only "facts" is a sign that we have forgotten how deeply we ourselves are moved by slogans in times of crisis.

While Russia carefully floods the bookstores of Japan with dirt-cheap propaganda (often in English!) and sends in movies all "sweetness and light," our free-wheeling system sends out what promises to sell best. In this age, that is almost always what appeals most to the growing "anti-American" mood. To our worst pulp books and magazines are added the whole gamut of films from the colonial series of *Beau Geste* and *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* to the war stories such as *Sands of Iwo Jima,* for which Japanese queue up in great lines to watch the accomplishments of our flame-throwers in incinerating their countrymen. Today in Japan "Remember Hiroshima" may become as potent a rallying point as was "Remember Pearl Harbor"—if we do not break through our provincialism.

The Church's Responsibility

It is true that we as churchmen have generally tried to be aware of the contrast between our plenty and the poverty of the rest of the world. But there is, I submit, a great deal of provincialism still to be found in much that is said and done even in the name of Christian ethics. It is surely true that the basic framework of our culture insinuates itself into all of our judgments. (John Bennett is to be complimented for what I believe was the first effort to work towards a genuine ecumenical ethic in his little volume on *The Christian As Citizen.*) For instance, American provincialism is apparent in the failure to sense the appeal of the ethics of Barth and the existentialism of Europe's philosophers to profound Christian thinkers in Japan. We have just not suffered enough directly to grasp the dimensions that these viewpoints stress. Wherever one goes in Japan one hears that while the "middle way" views of moderate social thought that have overtaken American theologians in this period of our national prosperity are appropriate enough for Americans, they are largely irrelevant in Asia.

We are also provincial if we persist in seeing only the obvious crises in the rest of the world and assuming that they are to be resolved by one-shot emergency programs. It is possible that our concern for economic aid of an emergency sort will put the churches in the position of working too much to maintain the *status quo,* with all its wretchedness in Asia, and with too little attention given to the basic economic problems that underlie the present crisis. Thus we may lose our perspective by paying too great attention to the surface wounds that call out for first aid and neglecting the deeper diseases that will prove fatal. If we permit ourselves to feel over-righteous for pushing programs which—for example—simply share American surpluses abroad, we cannot expect to evade the charge that we are motivated by self-interest, to the neglect of the fundamental structures that keep other nations in chronic need.

Another manifestation of our provincial

ethical thinking is our preoccupation with the "underdogs" of American society. How little thought we give to the fact that the human family is *one* family and that the needy neighbors are, for the most part, beyond our national borders. It would be folly to claim that there are no grave social problems within our own land; but it is a fact that the majority of our neediest are upper middle-class in international terms. With two-thirds of the world having an $80 per capita annual income, the American figure of $1,700 raises what we—in our inflated vocabulary—might call the $64,000 question.

I submit that it is no longer enough to put exclusive stress on championing one U.S. "underdog." For instance, the case of the laboring man is very ambiguous. When the worker in Pittsburgh seeks and gets his twenty-five cent per hour boost (three hours' pay for most Japanese!) his advances are easily borne by the producers. Prices go up as wages rise. In the long run the American balance is well maintained. But look at the growing gap with the rest of the world! Thus the increased prices of machine tools may make it impossible for Japan to buy from us the materials she needs in order to industrialize. A similar thorny problem surrounds us when we protect "the American producer and worker" from threats of cheap imports from Japan. In the famous tuna controversy, for example, the labor unions and canners of California united to frustrate the efforts of Japan's second largest industry to work toward a more favorable national balance of trade.

By this time the emptiness of our "trade not aid" slogan is evident. But have we done anything to rectify the collection of self-contradictions that sum up our dealings with Japan? In effect, America has said: (1) Japan must become self-supporting, and to that end we will cut off our direct economic aid. (2) Japan must not trade with Red China. (3) And now, by our high tariff barriers, we say that Japan cannot get out of the red by trade with us.

In summary, there is a provincialism in trying to solve our own social problems to the neglect of the world and in seeing the problems of the rest of the world only in terms of our own past national experience. It once was said that Christianity had no mission to other nations until it had corrected the evils of its own homeland. But if Paul had waited to bring the perfect society to every ward in Jerusalem, his little sect would still be at work only there. We can no more restrict our concern to the grievous sins of our national culture than we can yield to complacency about our achievements. An anxiety which extends no farther than the internal problems of our own nation may be as dangerous as any complacency; in fact, such provincial anxiety *is* complacency—complacency with respect to the world which "God so loved."

DISTORTED PERSPECTIVES

Robert W. Wood

Mr. Williams has pointed to the fateful complacency and provincialism which, at least to outsiders, seem to characterize so much of American thought and policy, and which have infected the ethical thinking and practice of our American churches. I wish to indicate another aspect of the problem, which stands out to one who has moved between two very different cultures. It is the problem of understanding and communication which arises almost inevitably when Christians from different cultures attempt to discuss political and international responsibility in a Christian context. If the discussion moves beyond the realm of general abstractions toward concrete situations and decisions, the thinking and actions of American Christians are almost universally misunderstood abroad and often criticized or set aside as ideological, i.e., as unconscious rationalization and implementation of political and economic self-interest. And the American perspective on Christians in other nations is subject to similar distortion.

Charges and Counter-charges

The ideological charge by our Christian critics abroad, sometimes explicit though more often implicit, is justified in so far as

we have capitulated to our American culture and have been led astray by false national idols—and candor requires our admission that this has been very considerable. To this extent we are *not* "misunderstood" by our fellow Christians abroad; rather, they understand us only too well, better in fact, than we do ourselves. But this charge is not wholly justified, for among many of us there is an uneasy conscience, and there are numerous members of the American churches who are acutely aware of this capitulation and seek to overcome it, but who also seek to maintain a responsible engagement with their own culture.

Indeed, we should be better understood abroad as "responsible" Christians if we were actually more irrelevant to our own culture, if we took our stance in the moralistic stratosphere and mouthed vague platitudes about world peace, world government, etc., which are virtually untranslatable into the limited concrete options which make up the stuff of political decisions. And, ironically, those who earnestly seek to couple a profoundly felt tension between faith and culture with responsible engagement, who seek to relate their faith to live political options in some way which will effectually moderate and influence political policies, are frequently among those daubed with the brush of "ideological thinking." Our virtues, if and where we have any, are confused with our obvious vices because in both cases (whether in capitulation to culture or in responsible tension with it) we stand close to the interests and policies of our nation as a whole. The outward differences are too subtle to be appreciated abroad, to say nothing of their appreciation by many Americans. The more responsible we try to be, the more irresponsible we appear, and the distinction between ideological involvement and responsible engagement with culture is obscured. Understanding and real conversation under these conditions becomes a haphazard and frustrating enterprise at best.

And the reverse American perspective on others is subject to similar distortion. It is extremely difficult even for those who have had considerable contact with Hromadka in Czechoslovakia, for example, to discern whether he has capitulated to Communism or whether he represents a responsible Christian engagement with his culture. More often we are presented with quite the opposite picture of what seems to be irresponsible disengagement from political realities and a puzzling political naivete. It is difficult to understand the neutralism of Asia and of so much of the Continent in the face of the Communist threat. So much of it seems unrealistic, moralistic, and superficial—and in no small degree it is, but not wholly. Communism bears a quite different meaning in a social and political situation which is radically different from our own. A decaying feudal order is found in most of the Far East. In a culture such as Japan's this has been complicated by new social and spiritual dislocations occasioned by rapid industrialization. In such situations—where our understanding of "freedom" is meaningless and where hope seems to lie only in the direction of change, whatever that change may involve—Communism takes on an utterly different meaning. The world and the forces in it *seem* different precisely because the peculiar configuration and nexus of these forces *are* different. And it is this fact which gives point to a valid element in the idea of a "contextual" or "situational" Christian ethic.

Understanding the Context

Words such as "realism" and "responsibility" acquire different content; as long as we converse about them in the abstract we are safe, but when we come down to the concrete situation the cleavages appear. Americans feel, with a considerable justification not often acknowledged by those abroad, that our institutions, government, and national policies, though far from perfect, are still viable in our situation from a Christian perspective. Responsibility means *engagement* with them, maintaining a tension without separation, preserving a rapport that will enable us to influence limited, relative national choices and policies. But in the Far East, and to no small degree in

Europe, there is often grave doubt about the worth or viability of present institutions and governments. And where, as in Asia, Christians are so few as to be virtually negligible in direct political influence, "responsibility" frequently means *disengagement* from these governments and institutions. This often takes the form of withdrawal, or of support of radical protest movements, or of playing with utopian dreams. But within the mixture there is likely to be a valid element of genuine realism and serious responsibility.

Thus the very different content of what seems "realistic" or "responsible" becomes frequently, if not usually, a severe obstacle to Christian communication and encounter. A recent example is the visit of the American delegation of ranking churchmen to the Russian Church. It was reported that the initial discussion concerning "peace" generated some heat. One of the American delegates, in a subsequent TV broadcast in the U.S., elaborated the delegation's insistence that any peace must be a "peace with justice, a peace with freedom." And, he added, "we did not surrender our position . . . because we felt we were right!" Here again the pathos of such encounters is pointed up. Both sides obviously felt they were "right"; indeed, it is probable that both sides would have accepted the formula "peace with justice, peace with freedom" in the abstract. But it is also true that the terms "peace," "justice," and "freedom" convey both similar and radically different connotations in variant contexts. This meant that, in large measure, the two delegations were talking past each other—a situation which is the rule rather than the exception in cross- cultural Christian discussions at the level of political analysis and responsibility.

A prevalent danger in such a situation is the assumption that contextual differences and perspectives are relatively unimportant, and that where Christians disagree it is due to irrationality, sheer perversity, or capitulation to culture, which can and should be overcome. The parallel danger is the contrary assumption that because of valid differences in context, there is very little that we can say to each other. Both assumptions are characteristic among Christians around the world, and both tend to make meaningful conversation impossible. Neither is correct, and they only serve to obscure the fact that there are at least three factors involved simultaneously: an area of agreement on both facts and responsibility; an area within which we need continually to correct the perspectives and understanding of each other, though not necessarily reach agreement; and a third area of inevitable difference in perspective and in the direction our political action will take.

These three cannot be plotted clearly. But neither can they be separated; they are involved in every ecumenical or cross-cultural discussion of concrete political responsibility. But it is difficult for us to explore this mixture without becoming separated from each other, unless there is a deeper level of encounter as Christians—an encounter in which we can rejoice in the agreements we can find, accept with humbleness the corrections we need, and trust and support each other in the differing political decisions and directions we take in our diverse situations. Unless this is possible, our cultural involvements will separate us from each other, and our discussions of political and international responsibility will be largely meaningless hit-and-miss affairs.

Public and Policy

(continued from page 12)

tional climate is determined by many things, including the degree to which our internal life corresponds to the values we profess and the moral health of the school, the church and the mass communication media.

3. *The public translates its will into national policy chiefly through the two-party system.* Choosing between the Democratic and Republican parties is the electorate's most effective means of influencing the direction and quality of American foreign policy. E. E. Schattschneider says "the existing party structures are the greatest multipliers and amplifiers of political energy ever invented." Through a major party the voters deal with many of the most important

issues simultaneously. Each party has a general policy predisposition on a great variety of domestic and foreign policy issues which citizens could never deal with one by one. Both the Republican and Democratic parties reflect the general moral and political consensus of the American people, but there is a persistent and predictable marginal difference on many issues which gives the voter a genuine opportunity to influence the character of foreign policy. It is far more important to get the more responsible candidate or the more responsible party in office than it is to attempt to influence the wrong candidate or the wrong party after the election. A thousand letters to Senator McCarthy urging him to respect human rights probably wouldn't budge him an inch, but a slight shift of votes in Wisconsin in 1952 would have moved him a thousand miles.

The Limits of Lobbying

The advice of church, economic, and other pressure groups on day-by-day policy issues is usually wrong, irrelevant, or too late. Such advice, with few exceptions, suffers from the limitations of public opinion in general.

Administrators and Congressmen are acutely aware of public sentiment and take it into account. They know that major policies cannot succeed without public understanding and support. But the more responsible a Congressman or President is to the national purpose, the less he is influenced by pressure groups on current issues. Senator John F. Kennedy said the people of Massachusetts sent him to Washington not to "serve merely as a seismograph to record shifts in popular opinion." Congressmen have been selected by the voters because they had "confidence in our judgment and our ability" to serve the nation's interests. "This may mean that we on occasion lead, inform, correct, and sometimes even ignore constituent opinion." (*Profiles in Courage,* pp. 16f.)

Pressure groups can make an impact on certain specific issues over which the Congress has some measure of control. These somewhat tangential issues, usually closely related to domestic interests, do affect the character of overall foreign policy. In recent years the two issues on which the Protestant churches have been most effective were opposition to U.M.T. and opposition to the sending of an ambassador to the Vatican. Protestant pressure was important, but probably not decisive, in getting our government to participate in the United Nations.

As far as political action in behalf of a responsible foreign policy is concerned, American Protestants, as Protestants, have been most active in the least effective channel (lobbying) and least active in the most effective channel (major party participation).

The President and the Public

Paul H. Nitze, former director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, agrees with and supplements Mr. Lippmann's assessment of the public's role in foreign policy: "Public opinion, in the sense of a healthy, humane, and decent national value system, is a precondition for having any worthwhile national strategy or foreign policy at all. Public opinion in so far as it deals with specific tactical issues is apt to be ill-informed, late, and often wrong. There is no way, however, in which public opinion can continuously remold our traditional value system so as to be healthy and appropriate to the day without discussing, arguing over, and to some extent interfering in, day-to-day tactical questions. When our political leaders look to the public for guidance on tactical issues, or even on matters of strategy, I think they err and are delinquent in their duty. When they ignore the essential underlying values of the people in the formulation of strategy, or in deciding on specific tactics, I think they err even more seriously. The point is that certain things are primarily the responsibility of the President and the Executive Branch, certain other things are the responsibility of the public, and some degree of harmony must be maintained between the two."

REVIEWS

German Protestants Face the Social Question; Volume I: The Conservative Phase, 1815-1871, by William O. Shanahan; University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana; 1954; xiv & 434 pp.; $6.75.

Professor Shanahan has produced a solid, competent, comprehensive work dealing with the reaction of German Protestantism to the industrial age and its many problems in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. His pages are full of compact detail, richly supported by bibliographical information. Many movements and many men are treated, often at considerable length. The organization is basically chronological, which has the somewhat unfortunate consequence of dividing the treatment of some of the topics into parts widely separated. But despite the somewhat loose structure, the work has a central focus and a central thesis.

The author explains that German Protestant social thought in the period considered was dominated by a Christian-conservative world view, which grew out of the intermingling of Pietism and romantic conservatism, though not without some Enlightenment influences. J. H. Wichern's Inner Mission—a federation of the numerous voluntary charities and educational institutions developed in the 1840's—was an effort to unite evangelical and social concerns. It did a great deal of good, and in 1848 might have led Protestants to a thorough consideration of the social situation. Its heritage from Pietism and its alliance with political conservatism, however, directed its attention and energies to charity and social amelioration rather than to social reform and justice. It too simply saw all social problems as individual moral problems. It was unable to understand the real loneliness and despair of the mushrooming industrial proletariat. Hence, the promise that it might lead German Protestants to reach and stir the masses was not fulfilled, and socialism had its opportunity. The Inner Mission became in effect "a functionary of a 'Christian-German' monarchy"; it became "the guardian of charities supported by the evangelical clergy, the aristocracy, and the upper middle class, the very groups most despised by the proletariat" (p. 299). The estrangement between industrial masses whose psyche was formed by the city and such socially concerned Christians as Wichern steadily widened to the point where communication finally failed, and Protestant leaders found themselves speaking only to the faithful. Therefore, though the Inner Mission did serve a genuine charitable and social educational role, its leaning toward paternalism seriously delimited its usefulness. By the early 1870's, Wichern's illness and Protestant absorption in the Kulturkampf further postponed Protestant effort to reach realistic understanding of modern social issues.

Though the book focuses on Wichern and his Inner Mission, many other fascinating figures move through its pages—for example, Gerlach, Hengstenberg, Huber, Stahl, and Wagener. All too often the figures appear as spokesmen of certain causes, and only slowly (and sometimes not at all) do they become alive and three-dimensional. The author has done well in relating economic, social, and political background to the developing of ideas and the shaping of movements. This work is for the serious reader, but for anyone deeply concerned with the struggle of Protestantism with the problems of industrial society it will be useful. We will look forward to the second volume, which will continue the story to 1933.

ROBERT T. HANDY

Christian Ethics: Sources of the Living Tradition, Edited with Introductions by Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr; The Ronald Press Company, New York; 1955; viii & 496 pp.; $5.00.

Professors Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr have here attempted "to gather together out of Christian history the most searching answers to the question of what it means to be a Christian." One may safely predict a wide use of this volume in colleges and seminaries, for which it is primarily intended, and also readily recognize its great

potential value to readers beyond the confines of the academic world. The book is based on "a belief that the essentials of Christian ethics can best be presented through the writings of great Christian thinkers of all ages." To this end, it provides an introductory chapter on Biblical Ethics; the chapters which follow consist of selections from primary sources, preceded in each case by an interpretive introduction.

The thinkers and movements represented include the Apostolic Fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Monasticism (St. Benedict and St. Francis), Mysticism (Bernard of Clairvaux and Meister Eckhart), Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Puritanism and Quakerism (Richard Baxter and Robert Barclay), Butler, Wesley, Edwards, Kierkegaard, and Rauschenbusch. A final chapter surveys the contemporary scene. The material is sufficiently varied in outlook and historical context to be comprehensive, yet it is sufficiently limited to make room for substantial introductions as well as selections that really represent their authors. The well-known competence of Professors Beach and Niebuhr plus the obvious need for such a volume, making readily accessible this primary source material together with some creative interpretation, will highly commend this book. A. W. H.

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Taking Sides

(continued from page 9)

an extremist like Buckley, with his God and McCarthy and Man, and consider only the enlightened apologists like Rossiter, Viereck, and Kirk. The familiar symptoms are here again: some piercingly prophetic insights along with some incredibly sloppy scholarship, lyrical rhapsodies of forgotten glories in company with the conversion of historic villains into misunderstood saints, savage and well-merited criticism of the delusions of a liberal culture embedded in an uncritical adulation of ancient abuses and vested stupidities—an incredible, coruscating, incoherent hodge-podge of lunacy and lucidity held together not by logic but by passion and by power.

But here I yield too much to the temper of the neo-conservative, and begin to write about him the way he writes about the rest of us. To be exact, the great defect in any officially conservative philosophy is that it cannot distinguish between tradition and traditionalism. Any sane philosophy must have a regard for the historical, the organic, the traditional, the customary. This is something that John Dewey, in his rebellion against a specific tradition, could never get back to. But traditionalism is something else. It is the blind, uncritical acceptance of anything which, in effect, has been able to establish itself as a tradition. What traditionalism lacks is a principle or a procedure for discriminating between various traditions. At this point traditional*ism* and liberal*ism* come together in a related weakness: the latter because it forgets how much it depends on tradition; the former because it cannot emancipate itself from harmful tradition.

Toward a Fresh Orientation

The problem we all confront right now, therefore, is that of achieving a fresh orientation toward the strains of liberalism and of conservatism in our secular social heritage. The problem is not so simple as that of just avoiding extremes. It is more that of discriminating elements within both traditions that may be of value, and then of incorporating them into a more comprehensive body of policy, in the light of which particular choices and acts of partisanship can be made. This is by no means a simple task, and will be slighted by those who prefer to settle for some easy identification of Christian strategy with a going secular

movement.

One thing needed for a realistic grappling with this problem is the development of a Protestant social methodology. Personally I happen to believe that this Protestant logic has already been made largely explicit in the history of American pragmatism. It is at this point of method—while we must grant some striking differences of emphasis and of degree—that a William James, a John Dewey, and a Reinhold Niebuhr come together. The recent review by Sidney Hook, in the *New York Times,* of the Kegley and Bretall book on Reinhold Niebuhr is a startling demonstration of the way the naturalistic wing and the Christian wing of American pragmatism can hinge together methodologically. The full development of this kind of logic is a responsibility which we must share with the philosopher and with the social scientist. It is a technical undertaking which calls for fresh insight, unremitting devotion, and a disciplined intellect. But if we neglect it any longer, we shall simply renew the old oscillation between doctrinaire liberalism and hidebound conservatism.

Of course, the Christian social strategy is something more than a method. A methodolatry can be as baleful as any other form of idolatry. Fundamentally we are involved here in a faith and a spirit and a perspective. Part of our need now is to recover the meanings and the loyalties with which we take sides in the first instance—take sides with the primary imperatives of the Christian social ethic. Toward this phase of the task a great deal of energy has been directed in recent years. But, if I may mix my metaphors with colloquial abandon, while we have done much of late to make sure of "the ground we stand on," we seem to have developed an increasing indisposition "to get off the ground" for any purpose whatsoever. In brief, we have been sinking back into the womb of our primary loyalties as a retreat from the specific commitments that alone can give these loyalties significance here and now.

Meanwhile, as we begin at last to work on a genuine Protestant social methodology, and as we revel once more in the faith and the spirit and the gifts, there are questions that each person can ask himself every day by way of keeping Christianly on the move. Just where do I basically take sides? Just where at this moment do I specifically take sides? In just what respect am I now called upon to change sides? And having deserted an old side, what is the new side which I adopt in its place?

Editorials

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their usual wisdom. Desperation is not particularly conducive to wisdom. Cyprus is the last seat of power for Britain in the Mediterranean. They have yielded the Suez canal, yet it is necessary for the British navy to control the Mediterranean. So it is very difficult to give up Cyprus, even though holding on to it violates every principle which the British have accepted. Furthermore, the Conservative Party has a more than desperate right wing still smarting about Suez. Anthony Eden has not had his expected popularity as Churchill's successor; and in the Cyprus dilemma the temptation was strong to "do something," even though that something was wrong. So the British acted, and banned the nationalist leader, Greek Archbishop Makarios. He was undoubtedly a trial to them, for he countenanced—and probably encouraged—terror, and he covered his policy with the mantle of his holy office. Greek orthodoxy has never succeeded in freeing itself of political enmeshment. This is particularly true because the Church was so often the surrogate for a subjugated nation.

At any rate Makarios became intolerable, and the patient British banned him from the island. As one might expect, the action fanned the flames of nationalism on the island, and it is safe to predict that they will have to bring Makarios back before peace can be restored. In reading about Cyprus one imagines that one is reading about French, rather than British, colonial affairs. But desperation narrows the difference between a wise and an unwise colonial policy.

R. N.

NEWS OF CHRISTIAN ACTION

MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN ACTION were informed last January of the decision to close the national office. The Board of Directors reached this decision only after long deliberation and careful analysis of the financial situation had eliminated all other alternatives as unrealistic and irresponsible. (At least we try to be "the responsible society" in microcosm!)

This action did not mean that anyone regretted our experiment in maintaining a national staff. In its more than four years of life, the office fulfilled many useful purposes. Our executive secretaries have served well and made a real contribution to the cause of Christian social concern in a difficult period. Our last executive secretary, Douglas Sturm, has resumed his studies under the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago. Jane Dilley, our former office secretary, is now working at The Riverside Church, New York.

* * *

THE CLOSING OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE, however, should not be equated with the demise of the organization. Anyone heard to remark that "Christian Action has folded" should be gently reprimanded and instantly corrected. The fellowship is a reality and can be preserved. Indeed, it is hoped that—relieved of the financial burden of the national office—those loyal members who have so frequently and so tangibly demonstrated their commitment to the movement will find that they are better able, through their own activity and through regional and local Christian Action fellowships, to devote their attention to the principal concerns for which we exist.

Although the corporate existence of Christian Action continues, it is now an informal fellowship without staff, the Board of Directors and the New York Chapter serving as nuclei and clearing house. For the time being, *Christianity and Society* is continuing publication.

SEVERAL LOCAL CHAPTERS continue their activity and show unmistakable signs of vigor. Members in Chicago have been the nucleus of a group tentatively titled Christian Frontier Fellowship, which proposed "to bring into an ongoing fellowship those persons in Greater Chicago who are concerned to apply the disciplines of social science and theology to formative social issues confronting the Church." Their first meeting, under the leadership of James Luther Adams, Gerhard E. O. Meyer, and many others, was held on March 3, 1956. The provocative (if somewhat lengthy) topic was "Reinhold Niebuhr's Political and Social Pragmatism: Should we follow Reinhold Niebuhr in minimizing critical principles in political and social policy?"

The New York Chapter sponsored a "Consultation on Evangelism" for ministers and laymen of New York City on February 3 and 4. The leadership included Eppling Reinartz, Robert Spike, representatives of Iona, East Harlem Protestant Parish, Roman Catholic Worker Priests, Episcopal Urban Priests, and numerous others. This was an attempt to explore the "concern that the whole mission of the Church be included in our evangelistic interest."

* * *

IT IS HOPED that Christian Action may continue to be a fellowship of mutual enlightenment, challenge, and support as we seek deeper understanding of and fresh approaches to the social, political, economic, and cultural problems of this perplexing era. To that end, the Board of Directors is anxious to receive reports of the activities of local chapters and suggestions from chapters and individuals as to the means through which our fellowship may best be maintained. Mrs. Arnold W. Hearn is doing the necessary minimal secretarial work. Our mailing address remains: 537 West 121st Street, New York 27, N. Y.

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